in which dried fish, raw meat, ghee butter and other foodstuffs are openly displayed. These goods are always black with flies and as one drives through the narrow streets of the shopping centre a black, buzzing cloud obscures the windscreen. In summer it is much worse. The Arabs are curiously indifferent to this plague of dirt, bad odour and insects, and will sit for hours outside the shops, idly gossiping, while flies settle on their beards and faces, fall into their Turkish tea, or get mixed up with their rice. It is almost impossible not to swallow flies when one is talking, and the only remedy when in these districts is to keep one's mouth tightly shut. I have seen Arab babies lying in the open air, their eyes swollen and festered from some disease and covered with flies. Trachoma and cataract are common troubles among the Arabs, and it is surprising that epidemics of typhoid and dysentery are not frequent.

The blame for this state of affairs cannot be laid on the Arab peasantry, who are illiterate, badly paid and poorly nourished. They have been brought up for centuries in primitive surroundings and have come to regard their way of life as natural and even congenial. It is curious that where the poorer class of Arab has come into close contact with the American or Englishman he has imitated, in a bizarre and comic fashion, the Western style of dress, but he has stopped short at the more important aspects of our civilization. Perhaps, in his present state of culture, the Arab has an ingrained scorn of sanitation and health. By disposition, and owing to the intense heat of the summer months, he is a lazy individual, judged by our standards, working only when he must or when the fancy takes him. But there are deeper reasons for the Arab's tolerance of dirt and disease. To say that his attitude is inborn, as some visitors to the Middle East are prone to do, is begging the question.

The Arab has some admirable virtues, not the least of which is his strong sense of hospitality and charity. The poor man seldom goes away empty-handed, and the visitor is always sure of a meal, a resting-place for the night, and coffee. If not always strictly truthful, the Arab is unfailingly polite and his courteous manners would often put a European to shame. He has outstanding courage, particularly in battle, and despises meanness and immorality. He is frugal, kindly unless his fierce pride and spirit of independence are upset, and intensely religious. Indeed, what impressed me most about the Arabs of all classes was their extreme devotion to the faith of the Prophet, and their realistic interpretation of the Koran, which means more to them in their daily lives than the Bible means

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companies; this is quite distinct from the actual royalties received from oil-producing wells, which, in several cases, have made millionaires of the sheikhs. In the Trucial Oman Coast, the independent sheikhs are not only paid landing fees for each aircraft, but receive a substantial rental for the use of their lands as aerodromes and flying-boat alighting sites, including emergency landing places which are seldom, if ever, used. There is, in addition, a large amount of native labour employed by the British Government in the vicinity of camps and airfields, which gives an additional source of income to the sheikhs.

It is to be regretted that out of his large income the average sheikh contributes very little indeed to the welfare and enlightenment of his people. There are no schools to speak of, except in the larger sheikhdoms, such as Bahrein; roads are an unheard-of luxury; there is no system of sanitation, drainage, or water supply; graft and chicanery amongst the sheikh's ministers are rife, so that large profits are made by the ruling families and merchants out of the silver rupee exchange and, by a cunning system of cornering the markets in wheat and other essential produce, the people are frequently kept short of food or obliged to buy at exhorbitant prices. In other words, it suits the convenience and the pockets of the sheikhs to retain an ignorant and illiterate peasantry, living in conditions of extreme poverty and intolerable squalor.

Unfortunately the British Government, through its system of treaty-relations with the sheikhs, unwittingly fosters this undemocratic form of rule. Under the treaties, which give the British Government certain territorial and coastal rights and privileges, and protect the Arab chieftains against attack from a foreign power (though not, it is to be noted, against tribal wars), the rulers are encouraged to maintain a traditional form of government, and are advised by a British Resident, usually an Arab civil servant, and a Political Officer. The latter, who is appointed by the Indian Government, is usually an ex-officer of an Indian regiment. His principal duty is to ensure that the conditions of the treaties are observed, and to advise the sheikh on matters of state, so that friction does not arise between the throne and its subjects.

Politically and strategically, the Trucial coast is of extreme importance to the British Empire, and in maintaining a benevolent suzerainty over this territory we must, at the same time, keep within the bounds of international law. Thus, while we exercise no colonial or territorial rights over Oman, which is, legally speaking,

648 not a dependency, and over which we hold no mandate, British interests are such that any display of truculence on the part of the rulers would be put down very peremptorily. On the other hand, the existence of an Arab League and the effectively close unity among Moslem peoples throughout the world, must incline British authority to tread warily. Any form of pressure which could be construed by Cairo propagandists as persecution, might easily lead to disturbances in the Arab world beyond Arabia, with unforeseen results.

648 511 The problem is a difficult one. Any reforms of communal life, such as the provision of schools, courts of law based on Western procedure, good roads, efficient water supply and sanitation, the provision of hospitals and pre-natal centres, municipal medical services, and a proper supervision over food supplies and control of prices, all of which are long-standing necessities, should be undertaken by the paramount rulers, the sheikhs, but they, for obvious reasons, are not anxious to diminish their personal incomes by such 'extravagances'.

The British Government, whose treaty 'rights' in Arabia are in reality confined to safeguarding the coasts from foreign aggression, and preventing acts of piracy, has only the rights of a tenant in the inland regions. It is true that active slavery is contrary to the agreement reached between the sheikhs and the British Government, and that for the perpetration of this or certain other 'international' crimes the British Government could exert pressure on the sheikhs, but it is doubtful whether, in these times of political freedom, we could persuade them to rebuild their towns and undertake similar expensive measures to create a healthy social order. On the other hand, the British Government benefits considerably from its commercial and military interests in the Trucial Oman Coast, and has a certain moral responsibility for the peoples inhabiting its zones of influence.

It would thus be quite possible to grant a British loan to the sheikhs for the express purpose of building up such essential public works as hospitals, schools, roads and efficient sanitation schemes, and to set up an organization to ensure that these schemes were properly carried out. The majority of the rulers would have no objection to foreign money being utilized for the improvement of their townships, provided the suspicion could be overcome that foreign influence and interference in internal affairs would not thereby be increased, and their own power and authority diminished. Any

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supervision of such schemes should preferably be undertaken by an adviser who was familiar with Arab mentality and possessed of a diplomatic 'flair', and the most suitable recruits could be found in the ranks of those imperturbable and tactful officials, the Political Officers.

Arabia, and the Oman Coast in particular, are of immense value to the British Commonwealth, for, apart from their importance to the R.A.F. and the Royal Navy, as strategic bases guarding the land and sea routes to India, the Far East and Africa, they are a potential source of vast petroleum supplies. In return for these benefits, it is incumbent on the British Government and the Government of India (which has political control of the coast from Bahrein to Salalah), to grant financial and economic assistance to the Arabs, who are virtually under British protection already, thereby enabling them to attain a standard of living comparable with that enjoyed by the peoples of territories which are officially under a mandate.

There is no doubt that if such a course were to be followed, amplified by assistance and expert advice in the agricultural and fishery industries, the Arabs would respond by giving us their trust and friendship, qualities which are unhappily deficient in Anglo-Arab relations at the present time. Arab agriculture in particular is in a woefully primitive state in the lower Persian Gulf, and the establishment of colleges, or advice centres, and expert assistance from India and the provision of modern implements, drainage and irrigation on up-to-date lines, would immeasurably help to increase the welfare of the native agriculturist.

a number of the camels which had been collected for safety at Dhaid while their owners were absent on a foray in the Batinah district.

In November, 1843, in consequence of an attack by Ghafalah on a Dubai caravan, Sheikh Maktum carried fire and sword into the country of that tribe and of the Na'im, who were allies of Sheikh Sultan-bin-Saqr, which led to a rupture between the two sheikhs. An inhabitant of Sharjah having been killed by the hand of a brother of Sheikh Maktum, a crisis again occurred, and again passed over harmlessly. Finally, a direct collision took place in the interior between the Ghafalah and the Sheikh of Dubai and several men were killed on either side. The Sheikh was victorious but lost the sight of one eye.

Petty tribal wars continued throughout the century. They were never on a large scale or serious enough to interfere with British interests in the Gulf, because the sheikhs were so jealous of one another that to combine was out of the question. The political game was played at its wiliest, and the practice of a sheikh was to play one ally off on another. If they had only acquired sufficient wisdom to settle their disputes amicably, co-operate on such matters as land reform, agriculture and water supply, the Oman Coast to-day might be a flourishing centre of Arab life. Instead of this, the major part of it is uncultivated desert, because the people have no incentive to irrigate the land and plant cereals and vegetables; that this can be done with considerable success is evidenced by the flourishing gardens at Sheikh's Wells and at Ras-al-Khaimah.

It has never been the policy of the sheikhs to better the lot of their subjects, however; as long as the people are unemployed for half the year, they can be relied upon to work hard at the pearl banks during the pearling season, and thus make enough money to carry them on for several months without working. It is a pernicious system, but the pearling-fleet owners argue that if the people were regularly employed on other occupations, such as agriculture or sheep rearing, they would have no desire to go to the pearl banks and the industry would languish for want of labour.

Another reason for the gradual cessation of tribal wars was the pearling industry, which is the most important feature of Arab life in the Gulf, and which necessitates the absence of a large proportion of the male inhabitants at the pearl fisheries during the two seasons of the year—April to June, and July to October. Since from

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Garden, whilst in the gardens at the Sheikh's Wells, I have seen excellent radishes, beetroot, runner beans, onions, pumpkins, lettuce and several Indian varieties of vegetables. Pomegranates, figs and pomeloes, even melons, can be grown in suitable surroundings where there is sufficient shade, and in the mountain plains the Shi'hou tribes have cultivated wheat and barley for centuries. All this was achieved in a small area by means of systematic cultivation, proper treatment of the soil, and irrigation, and I see no reason why it cannot be similarly done throughout the Trucial Oman Coast, especially in the more fertile valleys and inland regions.

The effect of controlled agriculture would not only make the Arabs of Oman practically self-supporting, but it would produce a fundamental change in their lives; the illiterate and emaciated peasantry, which at present lives a hand-to-mouth existence and is forced to spend a bare subsistence wage on buying food exported from India, at prices manipulated by the merchants, would be in a position to own smallholdings and sell their produce under some approved co-operative system. The Arab is an excellent farmer and market-gardener, if he is given sufficient guidance and incentive, and, judging by the flourishing condition of the date plantations in Oman, I have little doubt that a scheme of general agriculture, if sponsored by the British Government, would enjoy equal success.

It is a dream of which one has scant hopes of fulfilment. Knowing the methods of the British Government in countries under mandate or protective control, it is extremely unlikely that anything will be done to improve the lot of the Arabs in Oman and make them economically secure. That our suzerainty imposes a great moral responsibility upon our shoulders does not seem to have smitten the official conscience, and the British public as a whole is so utterly ignorant of affairs in Arabia that it is not likely to concern itself with the plight of primitive tribes in Oman—a land of which eighty per cent of the population of the British Isles have most probably never heard. It is inconceivable that a government (and the word is not used in its political or party sense, but as indicative of the British Raj), which can allow its colonies in West Africa and other parts of the Empire to stagnate, withholding the financial aid which could make these territories flourishing and self-supporting centres of world trade, should exert itself on behalf of the Oman Arabs, particularly when there is little commercial advantage to be gained thereby.

It is unfortunate that this chapter should end on so pessimistic

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441 before them. Jam Shan senior, whose family has been engaged in the pearl business for more than a hundred years, told me amusing stories of his visits to Paris where he once had an office in the Rue de la Paix.

From an old iron safe he produced two coarse linen bags, tied with string and sealed with wax, and undid the string. One bag contained seed pearls of little value or beauty; the other bulged with hundreds of pearls of every shape and size—yellow, black, pink and moon-white. One, which he placed in the palm of my hand, was priced at £50. It was a perfect sphere, of a delicate rose-pink, lit with a hundred facets of light, soft and lustrous, like moonlight on a desert pool. Its incomparable sheen mirrored every movement and, on looking into its depths one could see hues of red and mauve. To match this pearl for a necklace Jam Shan told me, might take take him three years; but when it was complete it would be worth a fortune. There was none other like it in the collection, although there were hundreds with delicate hues and lustres, from pale silvery pink to yellow-gold.

We declined the tea and rice cakes which were offered to us, and as Jam Shan bowed us out of the room he apologized for his poor collection and promised to show us some rarities the next time we called. It was ironical to think that a mere handful of those gleaming balls of nacre, manufactured by the oyster to cover an irritation, would keep a family in luxury and comfort for several [511] years. The expenses of the average Arab household, in the poorer quarter, are about £50 a year—the value of a single pearl! And yet Mr. Jam Shan and others like him, who could find a million pounds with ease if they required it, live so simply themselves that £250 would probably cover their personal and household expenses per annum.

[471] Our next visit was to the home of Basil Lermitte, of the Petroleum Concession. This house, which is situated on the water-front, is one of the most imposing in Dubai. It is only two storeys high but has an enormous frontage and the verandas and ornamental Persian columns on the façade are richly painted in red and blue. Two armed, uniformed guards examined our credentials at the gateway, and then conducted us through the open courtyard to Mr. Lermitte's quarters; the courtyard was a blaze of colour, bougainvillea and roses growing in profusion. There was a little marble fountain in the centre, and along the walls were peach, pomegranate and fig trees.

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which buzzed around us. These *Badu*, whose ages ranged from twenty to eighty years of age, were all bearded and very dirty; although they were the notables of the camp, their clothing was ragged and scanty, and my preconceptions of the romantic nomad's life they led quickly vanished. They were, if the truth be told, mere gipsies of the desert, as wild and treacherous as the nomad can be.

Sheikh Hadi, who had left us to be stared at by these strange creatures, who plucked at their beards and whispered to one another (Tandy's bare legs were a subject of much scandalized comment), presently reappeared with his father. Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali, ruler of all the Beni Quitab tribes of Oman, was a magnificent figure, in spite of his eighty years. Over six feet tall, thin and sinewy, he had a flowing white beard and a pair of the keenest eyes I have ever seen. His face, dominated by a sharp, hawk-like nose, was the colour of old parchment and revealed great character and power. All stood up as he entered the tent, stooping low at the entrance, and there was a long silence as we were introduced by Sheikh Hamid.

When the Sheikh Mohammed had taken his place in the circle we returned to our squatting position, while Tandy alone conversed with the sheikh about the weather, the state of the crops and the health of the camels. The rest of us did not speak, eyeing the gnarled face of Mohammed, with its great, hooked nose and deep-set eyes, with something approaching awe. Then something which Tandy said made the old man laugh and the spell was broken. Cigarettes were produced and a babel of conversation broke loose. Tandy got down to business and discussed local politics, the irrigation project at Djaidh, and finally, realizing that the old man was in a good humour, asked him if he would provide guides for the Anti-Locust Commission, which wanted to enter the mountain pass beyond Jebel Faiyah.

'Praise Allah, but they are spies, these Indians!' the sheikh laughed. 'They want to map out my land and then build huts on it, like they did at Sharjah. Next, your Government will want to flatten the ground to make a nest for the great sky-birds, *ti-ara* (aeroplanes). Truly, the ways of Allah are mysterious and wonderful, but the ways of the foreigner are cunning.' The others considered this speech a huge joke, and laughed and applauded. Then Tandy, who is no mean diplomat, suggested that the Beni Quitab were afraid that the Anti-Locust party, by

244 and various vegetables are cultivated in the inland valleys. Cows, goats and other live-
233 stock are raised in the towns and the vil-
361 lages, but camels, goats and sheep are the mainstay of the Bedouin.

816 Ocher is mined on the offshore island of
471 Bu Musa, but no other mineral deposits of
135 commercial value are known to exist. The Petroleum Development (Trucial Coast) Ltd., a subsidiary of the Iraq Petroleum Company, holds concessions for the exploitation of the oil reserves of Trucial Oman, and is conducting exploratory operations in the area. The discovery of oil would undoubtedly have a revolutionary effect upon the economy and the standards of living of the people.

361 A large majority of the inhabitants dwell in the headquarters towns of the different sheikhdoms or in adjacent fishing or agricultural villages. Most of the towns are compact, with narrow, crooked streets, darkened by projecting balconies and matting canopies put up for protection from the sun. Dibai, the largest, is a walled town with an estimated population of over 20,000. Sharja, the second in size, is a settlement of 3,000 to 15,000 which is unwalled but surrounded by a fringe of palm thatch, or *barasti*, huts.
344 The homes of the wealthy merchants are of
361 two stories with wide balconies and spacious inner courts, but those of the poor are usually simple one- or two-room huts of mud brick or palm thatch. The Bedouin live in the traditional black goat's hair tents of the nomadic tribes. They move about with their herds, following fresh pastures in the winter and congregating around desert wells in the
361 summer. A few join the fishing or the pearl-
228 ing fleets during the summer season, while their families camp in the vicinity of the towns.

144 The nutritional habits of the people vary
571 with the racial, the social and the economic backgrounds of the diverse communities. Poverty and lack of adequate transportation facilities restrict the foodstuffs available to a large percentage of the population.
262 Dates, breads prepared from wheat or mil-